

Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) today secured \$1.5 million in federal funding for the Northern Border Regional Commission. The grant is the first time the four-state, economic development organization has received funding.

The federal-state partnership will provide investment and support for the northernmost counties of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and New York. Modeled after the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission, the NBRC will develop long-term strategies to promote the success of the region by encouraging inter-state cooperation, federal support and private investment.

Vermont's Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille and Orleans counties are among 36 counties included in the regional development effort. The NBRC will include representatives from each of the states, as well as a presidentially-appointed co-chair.

Welch successfully amended the House version of the Energy and Water appropriations bill in July to include \$3 million in funding to the commission. Leahy and Sanders supported the amendment in conference. The conference report, H.R. 3183, passed the Senate Thursday afternoon and the House on Oct 1. It will now go to President Obama for signature.

The commission was originally authorized in 2008 after legislation co-authored by Welch was incorporated into the Farm Bill.

Leahy said, "This new investment of federal funds will help spur economic development and job creation in areas where the need and where economic potential are especially great. We now will be able to take a regional look at economic development efforts and opportunities along the Northern Border."

Sanders said, "During the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, this funding is a smart investment in economic development for the future."

Welch said, “By investing federal resources in northern Vermont and neighboring states, the Northern Border Regional Commission will enhance local infrastructure, spur economic development, and bring jobs to the region. This federal-state partnership has the potential to encourage collaboration throughout the region and provide resources to community-based projects in all four states.”